



SCIENTIFIC PANEL ON CONTAMINANTS IN THE FOOD CHAIN

MINUTES OF THE 112TH PLENARY MEETING

Audio-web conference, 24-25 November 2020

(Agreed on 15 December 2020)

Participants

■ Panel Members:

Margherita Bignami, Laurent Bodin, Kevin Chipman, Jesús Del Mazo, Bettina Grasl-Kraupp, Christer Hogstrand, Ron Hoogenboom, Jean-Charles Leblanc, Carlo Nebbia, Elsa Nielsen, Evangelia Ntzani, Annette Petersen, Salomon Sand, Dieter Schrenk, Tanja Schwerdtle, Christiane Vleminckx and Heather Wallace.

■ Hearing Experts¹:

Not applicable

■ European Commission and/or Member States representatives:

Frans Verstraete, Ivana Poustkova and Veerle Vanheusden (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit E2), Paolo Caricato and Patricia Herrero Sancho (European Commission, DG Health and Food Safety, Unit G4).

■ EFSA:

BIOCONTAM Unit:

Katleen Baert, Marco Binaglia, Anna Christodoulidou, Federico Cruciani, Ernesto Liebana Criado, Luisa Ramos Bordajandi, Hans Steinkellner and Carina Wenger.

AMU Unit:

José Cortiñas Abrahantes (for Item 6.1).

DATA Unit:

Claudia Cascio (for Item 6.1.), José Gómez Ruiz (for Item 8) and Davide Arcella (for Items 6.1 and 8).

¹ As defined in Article 17 of the Decision of the Executive Director concerning the selection of members of the Scientific Committee, the Scientific Panels, and the selection of external experts to assist EFSA with its scientific work: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/expertselection.pdf

■ Others:

Not applicable

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed the participants. No Apologies were received.

2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence² and the Decision of the Executive Director on Competing Interest Management³, EFSA screened the Annual Declarations of Interest filled out by the Panel members invited to the present meeting. No Conflicts of Interest related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process, and no interests were declared orally by the members at the beginning of this meeting.

4. Agreement of the minutes of the 111th Plenary meeting held on 23-24.09.2020

The minutes of the 111th Plenary meeting⁴ held on 23-24 September 2020 were agreed by the CONTAM Panel on 9 October 2020.

5. Report on written procedures since the 111th Plenary meeting held on 23-24.09.2020

A written procedure was held for the possible endorsement for public consultation of the Draft Update of the Scientific Opinion on Hexabromocyclododecanes (HBCDDs) in Food (EFSA-Q-2018-00433)⁵. The Opinion was endorsed by unanimous vote on 8 October and published for public consultation on 14 October.

6. Scientific outputs submitted for discussion and possible adoption

6.1. Evaluation of the shucking of certain species of scallops contaminated with lipophilic toxins (EFSA-Q-2020-00245)⁶

The WG chair presented an overview of the draft Opinion for discussion. Data on concentrations of lipophilic toxins (i.e. okadaic acid group, azaspiracid group and yessotoxin group) in scallops were received from several EU member states, but only the data submitted by Ireland and France could be used for the assessment as they provided information on concentrations in both whole animals and different animal parts. Due to the paucity of data only two species could be included in the assessment (*Pecten maximus* and *Aequipecten opercularis*). For Okadaic acid it was possible to establish ratios between the levels of the toxin in entire animals and in edible parts, muscle and/or gonads. For azaspiracids only the ratio between the levels in entire

² http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/policy_independence.pdf

³ http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/corporate_publications/files/competing_interest_management_17.pdf

⁴ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/111th-plenary-meeting-contam-panel>

⁵ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2018-00433>

⁶ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00245>

animals and in gonads could be established, whereas no ratios could be established for yessotoxins because of too low toxin levels in scallops. An estimate of sample sizes needed for classification of a sampling area as compliant (i.e. mean concentration below regulatory maximum levels) was also provided in the draft Opinion. The CONTAM Panel discussed the draft Opinion and made a series of suggestions to the WG. Overall, the CONTAM Panel appreciated the work done by the WG in particular considering the complexity of the database. It was agreed that due to time constraints a thorough quantification of uncertainties could not be fully implemented in the present Opinion. It was also agreed that, after the next WG meeting in early December, the draft Opinion will be sent to the EC WG on bivalve molluscs for review and discussion. The Opinion will be finalised and tabled for possible adoption at the 113th CONTAM Panel Plenary meeting.

7. CONTAM Approach to uncertainty analysis

Heather Wallace and Salomon Sand updated the Panel on the approach under development to support the application of EFSA's Scientific Committee Guidance on Uncertainty Analysis in Scientific Assessments in the framework of the CONTAM Panel Opinions. The approach aims to identify, categorise and prioritise a number of uncertainties in the past Scientific Opinions of the CONTAM Panel, with the objective to provide the WGs with specific relevant examples for the uncertainty analysis performed as part of future CONTAM Opinions.

8. Draft Report on dietary exposure assessment to inorganic arsenic (EFSA-Q-2020-00076)⁷

José Gómez Ruiz presented an overview of the draft EFSA Scientific Report on Chronic dietary exposure to inorganic arsenic. The draft report had been previously reviewed by three Members of the CONTAM Panel. The CONTAM Panel endorsed the report pending the implementation of minor changes.

9. Introduction to the EFSA's "Scientific and Technical Support Scheme"

Marco Binaglia introduced to the Panel the above EFSA Call for expression of interest. The Call is published on the EFSA website⁸ and is expected to remain open for four years. EFSA CONTAM Secretariat invited the experts to disseminate among their contacts the web-link to the EFSA Call.

10. Feedback from the Scientific Committee/ Scientific Panels, CONTAM Working Groups, EFSA, the European Commission

10.1. European Commission

The European Commission representative gave an update on the activities in relation to the scientific Opinions of the CONTAM Panel. Several amendments of current legislation are under discussion with the Member States as an outcome of the CONTAM Panel scientific Opinions. In addition, an update was provided on the future mandates in preparation.

⁷ <http://registerofquestions.efsa.europa.eu/roqFrontend/questionLoader?question=EFSA-Q-2020-00076>

⁸ <https://careers.efsa.europa.eu/jobs/notice-of-call-for-expressions-of-interest-scientific-and-technical-support-various-scientific-profiles-214>

10.2. Update from CONTAM Panel Working Groups

- **WG on Brominated flame retardants in food**

The Chair of the WG informed the Panel that the public consultation of the HBCDDs draft Opinion will be finalised on 25 November, and at the next meetings the comments submitted will be considered in the finalisation of the draft Opinion. The WG Chair also informed that the PBDEs draft Opinion is progressing well.

- **WG on Scallops**

See Item 6.1.

- **WG on Hydroxymethyl furfural in bees**

The Chair of the WG informed that a first meeting had already taken place in October. A further WG member was assumed to cover also expertise in chemistry, formation and occurrence of HMF in bee feed. After the first WG meeting EC clarified that both "home-made" and commercial bee feed needs to be covered. Based on the fact that sometimes bee feed is applied throughout the year all types of bees need to be considered in principle, not just "winter bees". It was noted that there were almost no analytical results of HMF in feed in the EFSA database. The WG has therefore approached several institutions that might hold such data and be willing to share them.

- **WG on High pressure processing**

The WG member representing the CONTAM Panel informed the Panel that the collection of the evidence has been finalised and will be appraised and discussed at the next WG meeting.

- **WG on feed detoxification**

The WG informed the Panel on the progress of the assessment of a process for decontamination of aflatoxin in groundnut press cake. The WG suggested that additional information is needed to carry out this assessment and presented its proposal for the additional information to be requested. The Panel provided advice and agreed to a set of questions to be asked. In particular the Panel agreed that in the case the identification and/or isolation of by-products generated from the chemical detoxification process would not be feasible, toxicological testing of an extract of the detoxified feed containing the aforementioned by-products could also be an acceptable alternative. The questions as agreed by the Panel will be sent to the applicant.

10.3. EFSA

The CONTAM Team Leader informed that two draft mandates on food contaminants were received from the German and Dutch Competent Authorities. One mandate regarding a possible assessment on the presence of vanadium in food and drinking water, submitted by the German BfR, will be discussed at the forthcoming meeting of the EFSA Advisory Forum. The second mandate, submitted by the Dutch NVWA, on the possibility to advise on the levels of PFAS in food that could be present without exceeding the TWI recently established by the CONTAM Panel will be considered and discussed with DG SANTE as it may fall outside the responsibilities of EFSA.

The CONTAM Team Leader presented the plan to migrate the activities of the Panel to the MS Teams platform. Several Panel Members indicated technical limitations to access the platform, in particular if MS Teams is also used by the employing organization of the expert. The Panel Members were invited to inform the CONTAM team on these technical issues.

Finally, the Panel was informed that as from January 2021 Katleen Baert will become the Team Leader of the Food Contact Material Team in the Unit on Food Ingredient and Packaging (FIP). The Panel Members congratulated Katleen with her new function in EFSA and thanked her for the support provided during her service in the BIOCONTAM Unit.

10.4. Scientific Committee and Working groups of interest to the CONTAM Panel

The Panel Chair reported on the main points discussed at the 101st meeting of the EFSA Scientific Committee⁹. In particular the Scientific Committee endorsed for public consultation the draft Opinions on the approach to the environmental risk assessment of multiple stressors in honeybees and on non-monotonic dose-response. An update was provided on the discussion on a draft mandate of the European Commission requesting the performance of a risk-benefit assessment of fish consumption in relation to the presence of dioxins (PCDD/FS) and dioxin-like PCBs. Other points included the discussion on the applicability of the margin of exposure approach in the risk assessment of botanicals and botanical preparations used as feed additives, an update on the finalisation of the guidance for risk assessment of nano substances and the nano technical guidance and discussions on the draft Opinion on the scientific criteria to group chemicals for the assessment of combined exposure to multiple chemicals and on the draft statement on the derivation of Health-Based Guidance Values for regulated products that are also nutrients.

For the Working groups of interest for the CONTAM Panel, updates were given on the activities of the WG on Genotoxicity, the WG on the update of the Benchmark Dose guidance, the WG on Uncertainty, the WG on Epidemiological studies and the WG on Chemical mixtures.

11. Any other business

Not applicable

⁹ <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/events/event/101st-plenary-meeting-scientific-committee>